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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is the degree to which school effectiveness characteristics are alterable from a measurement perspective. The basis for measurement was the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire. The sample included seven schools which took the questionnaire for the first time between January and June of 1982 and for the second time in June of 1983. Five schools were elementary, one housed grades 7 and 8, and the seventh was a K-8 school. Three of the schools were in large cities, two were in small towns, and two were in rural areas. The first set of pre/post questionnaire data suggest that in schools where teachers and principals are attempting to improve in accordance with research-based school effectiveness practices: (1) changes are more likely to happen in curriculum development, home/school partnerships, principal behavior, assessing student progress, and providing safety and security; (2) changes are less likely to happen in teaching practices and teachers' attitudes; classroom-based variables may be harder to change and take more time than school-based variables; and (3) changes are more likely to happen in schools where the intensity of school improvement efforts are greater. (Author/BW)

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ARE THE SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS
CHARACTERISTICS ALTERABLE?
A Connecticut Perspective

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Joan Shoemaker

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ABSTRACT

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PURPOSE

Are the school effectiveness characteristics alterable? Of course they are. The focus of this paper is the degree to which the characteristics are alterable from a measurement perspective. The basis for measurement is the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire.

We are attempting to measure change. We can see change when we visit schools. We can hear about change when we talk with teachers and principals. However, the purpose of this paper is to analyze change based upon principals' and teachers' recorded perceptions on the School Effectiveness Questionnaire.

The sample includes seven schools. These schools comprise the entire sample of Connecticut schools whose faculties, as of January 1984, were administered the School Effectiveness Questionnaire at two points in time. All of the schools took the Questionnaire for the first time between January and June of 1982 and for the second time in June of 1983. Five schools are elementary, one houses grades 7 and 8 and the seventh is a K-8 school. Three of the schools are in large cities, two are in small towns and two are in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Are the school effectiveness characteristics alterable from a Connecticut perspective? It all depends. The first set of pre/post Questionnaire data suggest that in schools where teachers and principals are attempting to improve in accordance with research-based school effectiveness practices:

- o Changes are more likely to happen in curriculum development, home/school partnerships, principal behavior, assessing student progress and providing safety and security.
- o Changes are less likely to happen in teaching practices and teachers' attitudes. Classroom-based variables may be harder to change and take more time than school-based variables.
- o Changes are more likely to happen in schools where the intensity of school improvement efforts are greater. In schools where the overall intensity of effort is high, changes can occur on as many as six variables. In School B, two additional characteristics approached the significance criterion at .051 and .055. In schools where the overall intensity of effort is low, change may not occur on any variable.

Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
Significant Change in Scores After One Year
of Program Implementation and Overall
Intensity of Implementation Effort

School	Safety	Mission	Leadership	Expectations	Time	Monitoring	Home	Overall Intensity of Implementation Effort
A								Low
B			Positive Change					High
C								Low
D		Positive Change					Positive Change	Moderate
E	Positive Change	Positive Change	Positive Change	Positive Change		Positive Change	Positive Change	High
F		Positive Change				Positive Change	Positive Change	High
G	Positive Change				Positive Change			Moderate

PURPOSE

Are the school effectiveness characteristics alterable? Of course they are. The focus of this paper is the degree to which the characteristics are alterable from a measurement perspective. The basis for measurement is the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire.

The Connecticut perspective includes these features:

1. The school principal and faculty volunteer to participate in a state department initiative centered about research-based school improvement practices.
2. The faculty and principal take the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire, a 100 item paper and pencil instrument designed to measure the degree to which seven research-based school effectiveness characteristics are present in the school.
3. Based upon the findings, the principal and faculty develop a plan of activities to alter one or more of the characteristics which they feel need improvement. The nature of the action planning activities varies greatly among schools.
4. Following at least one year of project implementation, the principal and faculty take the Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire to measure the status of the seven school effectiveness characteristics at a second point in time.

We are attempting to measure change. We can see change when we visit schools. We can hear about change when we talk with teachers and principals. However, the purpose of this paper is to analyze change based upon principals' and teachers' recorded perceptions on the School Effectiveness Questionnaire.

This analysis is but one portion of a comprehensive evaluation effort. Forthcoming analyses will feature achievement and ethnographic information. Furthermore, we are measuring change on all seven characteristics regardless of the focus of the action planning activities because the characteristics are not mutually exclusive and because we believe that school effectiveness requires that all seven be present to a high degree.

The sample includes seven schools. These schools comprise the entire sample of Connecticut schools whose faculties, as of January 1984, were administered the School Effectiveness Questionnaire at two points in time. All of the schools took the Questionnaire for the first time between January and June of 1982 and for the second time in June of 1983. Five schools are elementary, one houses grades 7 and 8 and the seventh is a K-8 school. Three of the schools are in large cities, two are in small towns and two are in rural areas.

Tables 1 through 7 show the means, variances and t values for each of the seven schools on each of the seven characteristics. Fourteen of the forty-nine t values were statistically significant at .05. Table 8 presents a summary of Tables 1 through 7.

FINDINGS

Safe and Orderly Environment (Table 1)

There is an orderly, purposeful atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. However, the atmosphere is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.

In Schools E and G there were significant changes on the Safe and Orderly Environment scale. Two items accounted for most of the change for School E.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
1. This school is a safe and secure place to work.	56% Agree	95% Agree
56. The school is neat, bright, clean and comfortable	67% Agree	96% Agree
Two items accounted for most of the change for School G.		

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
23. A positive feeling permeates this school.	44% Agree	82% Agree
44. Teachers, Administrators and parents assume responsibility for discipline.	74% Agree	87% Agree

Clear School Mission (Table 2)

There is a clearly articulated mission of the school through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability.

In schools D, E and F there were significant changes on the Clear School Mission scale. One particular item accounted for change in two schools.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
41. In Language Arts, an identified set of objectives are the focus of instruction		
	School F	50% Agree
	School D	19% Agree
		67% Agree
		47% Agree

In school F, a second item accounted for change

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
50. Reading objectives are coordinated and monitored through all grades.	58% Agree	79% Agree

Instructional Leadership (Table 3)

The principal acts as the instructional leader who effectively communicates the mission of the school to the staff, parents and students and who understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program of the school.

In schools B and E there were significant changes on the Instructional Leadership scale. Five items accounted for positive changes in both schools.

<u>Item</u>		<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
6. The principal makes frequent formal classroom observations.			
	School B	18% Agree	77% Agree
	School E	15% Agree	41% Agree
48. The principal leads frequent formal discussions concerning instruction and student achievement.			
	School B	44% Agree	68% Agree
	School E	19% Agree	50% Agree
60. The principal frequently communicates to individual teachers their responsibility in relation to student achievement.			
	School B	50% Agree	68% Agree
	School E	52% Agree	75% Agree
63. The principal puts much emphasis on the meaning and use of standardized test results.			
	School B	50% Agree	86% Agree
	School E	52% Agree	79% Agree
17. There is clear, strong, centralized instructional leadership from the principal in this school.			
	School B	82% Agree	100% Agree
	School E	52% Agree	79% Agree
90. During follow-up to formal observations the principal's main emphasis is on instructional improvement.			
	School B	59% Agree	82% Agree
	School E	23% Agree	52% Agree

In School B, two additional items accounted for positive change on the Instructional Leadership scale.

13. Instructional issues are frequently the focus of faculty meetings.	50% Agree	77% Agree
16. The principal uses test results to recommend modifications or changes in the instructional program.	59% Agree	90% Agree

In School E, two additional items accounted for positive change on the Instructional Leadership scale.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
4. Most problems facing this school can be solved by the principal and faculty without a great deal of outside help.	60% Agree	96% Agree
57. Formal observations by the principal are regularly followed by a post-observation conference.	31% Agree	54% Agree

High Expectations (Table 4)

The school displays a climate of expectation in which the staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they (the staff) have the capability to help students achieve such mastery. Only School E showed significant change on the High Expectations scale. Two items accounted for positive change.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
74. Teachers believe that all students in this school can master basic skills as a result of the instructional program.	74% Agree	96% Agree
83. The number of low income children retained is proportionately equivalent to other children retained.	47% Agree	75% Agree

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task (Table 5)

Teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in basic skill areas. For a high percentage of that allocated time students are engaged in planned learning activities.

Only School G showed significant positive change on the Time on Task scale. Two items accounted for most of the change.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
72. Fifty minutes or more is allocated to mathematics instruction each day.	32% Agree	86% Agree
33. Factors outside the classroom rarely interrupt basic skills instruction.	52% Agree	78% Agree

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress (Table 6)

Information on student academic progress is obtained frequently. Multiple assessment methods are used. The results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and also to improve the instructional program.

In Schools E and F there were significant changes on the Monitoring of Student Progress Scale. In both schools, one item in particular accounted for positive change.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
37. The standardized testing program is an accurate and valid measure of the basic skills curriculum in this school.		
School E	36% Agree	50% Agree
School F	33% Agree	57% Agree

In School E, one additional item accounted for positive change.

73. Student assignments in basic skills are corrected daily.	11% Agree	96% Agree
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In School F, one additional item accounted for positive change.

40. Teachers and the principal thoroughly review and analyze test results to plan instructional program modifications.	47% Agree	75% Agree
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Home/School Relations (Table 7)

Parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel that they have an important role in achieving this mission.

In Schools D,E and F there were significant changes on the Home/School Relations scale. Two items accounted for change in School D.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>
31. Homework is monitored at home.	31% Agree	53% Agree
35. Ninety-five to one hundred percent of students complete assigned homework before coming to school.	20% Agree	50% Agree

Two items account for change in School E.

9. Most parents would rate this school as superior.	78% Agree	91% Agree
68. There is an active parent/school group in this school that involves many parents.	74% Agree	96% Agree

Two items account for change in School F.

36. Ninety to one hundred percent of parents attend scheduled parent-teacher conferences.	10% Agree	34% Agree
84. Home visits, phone calls, newsletters, regular notes, etc., are all ways that most teachers frequently communicate with parents.	62% Agree	82% Agree

IMPLICATIONS

The characteristics showing significant positive changes in the largest number of schools were Clear School Mission and Home/School Relations. Changes in these characteristics occurred in three schools. For this sample, clear school mission translated into identifying objectives in language arts (reading and math objectives were already in place) and coordinating and monitoring reading objectives through all grades. The implications are that in at least three schools there were active curriculum development activities and the results were notable.

Changes in the area of home/school relations centered about homework monitoring in one school, on a more active parent group in a second school and increased parent attendance at parent conferences in a third school.

Our hypotheses about the overwhelming importance of the principal continues to be reinforced. In two of the sample schools, changes in leadership behavior did not go unnoticed and positive change occurred in many areas: Principals made more frequent classroom observations, led more frequent formal discussions about instruction and achievement, reminded teachers more frequently about their responsibility for achievement, put more emphasis on the use of test results, focused on instructional issues in faculty meetings, and emphasized instructional improvement in post-observational conferences.

In the two schools where there were changes in the Monitoring of student progress, the implications are that the faculties came to an understanding about the relationship between instruction and testing.

Changes in the Safe and Orderly Environment dimension occurred in two schools. The perceptions of one faculty were that the school became more safe, secure, neat, bright, clean and comfortable. In the second school, feelings became more positive about the overall climate.

The characteristics which showed significant positive changes in only one school were High Expectations and Opportunity to Learn /Time on Task. The paucity of significant findings is not surprising. The Expectations scale is the least reliable and the validity of measuring attitudes with a self-report scale is questionable. The Opportunity scale is most directly related to how teachers teach and how lessons are presented. The items which showed change on the Opportunity to Learn scale were those which can be described as easier to change: Allocated time for mathematics was increased and outside disruptions were decreased. One item which did not show significant positive change in any of the schools was Item 76: Teachers expect and plan assignments so that students will be highly successful during practice work following instruction.

DISCUSSION

Noone ever has said that effective educational change comes easily. Measuring change appears to be equally challenging. Our beginning analyses provide a few substantive clues and suggest a long list of cautions, not the least of which is inherent in the very process of measurement.

I deliberately have refrained from revealing any information about each of the seven schools that was not measured directly by the Questionnaire for two very good reasons:

1. Comparative data are beyond the scope of this paper, and
2. Comparative data still are being collected and analyzed.

Nevertheless, Table 8 contains one column of additional information, the overall intensity of implementation effort in each of the schools. This column represents the collective judgements of the state department program and evaluation personnel who have worked most closely with each of the schools.

The implications from Table 8 are that the school effectiveness characteristics are more alterable in schools where teachers and principals try harder. In schools E and F, efforts were highest and more changes were realized. In schools A and C, efforts were lowest and no changes were significant. In schools D and G, efforts were moderate and some changes were noted. School B is the one anomaly--efforts were high and change was minimal. The record, however, is almost perfect. In School B, two additional characteristics approached the significance criterion of .05. Change on the safety characteristic was significant at .051 and change on the mission characteristic was significant at .055.

The importance of sufficient time for change to occur must be considered. We are analyzing measured change which has occurred after, at best, one full school year and a few months of a second school year. Our results might reflect variables which are alterable in a relatively short period of time. Those that are harder to change may also take a longer period of time. For example, schools showed relatively little change on the Opportunity to Learn dimension. This scale contains items which require considerable effort, time and training to change. The items refer to how teachers teach, and how lessons are presented. The focus is on the individual classroom in contrast to the total school.

The findings suggest a further hypothesis. Alterable variables at the school level provide the necessary framework for changes in the classroom to take place. Providing a safe and orderly environment, developing and adopting clear goals and objectives, providing achievement oriented instructional leadership, developing and adopting a system for monitoring student progress and nurturing and expanding school/home partnerships provide the framework for the next phase--providing the classroom opportunities for all students to learn and increasing the classroom expectations for all students to learn.

Increased opportunities and expectations are classroom characteristics which are harder to change, take a longer time to change and are dependent upon an effective school building climate for nurturance and direction.

CONCLUSION

Are the school effectiveness characteristics alterable from a Connecticut perspective? It all depends. The first set of pre/post Questionnaire data suggest that in schools where teachers and principals are attempting to improve in accordance with research-based school effectiveness practices:

- o Changes are more likely to happen in curriculum development, home/school partnerships, principal behavior, assessing student progress and providing safety and security.
- o Changes are less likely to happen in teaching practices and teachers' attitudes. Classroom-based variables may be harder to change and take more time than school-based variables. The hypothesis stands to be tested.
- o Changes are more likely to happen in schools where the intensity of school improvement efforts are greater. In schools where the overall intensity of effort is high, changes can occur on as many as six variables. In schools where the overall intensity of effort is low, change may not occur on any variable.

Our analyses will continue. A Spring 1984 administration of the Questionnaire will add pre and post scores for an additional fifteen schools. Achievement and ethnographic data will be integrated with the Questionnaire data for a comprehensive picture of how schools change. Additional classroom and instructionally focused items have been added to the Questionnaire for tryout.

TABLE 1
Safe and Orderly Environment
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	29	3.162	.677	.124	.72
	2	31	3.274	.528	.095	
B	1	23	4.078	.419	.087	2.01
	2	22	4.323	.395	.084	
C	1	26	3.050	.741	.145	.20
	2	22	3.009	.687	.146	
D	1	58	3.222	.627	.082	.48
	2	51	3.276	.524	.073	
E	1	23	3.701	.459	.096	4.39**
	2	23	4.283	.426	.089	
F	1	39	3.438	.616	.099	.06
	2	38	3.447	.637	.103	
G	1	26	3.842	.442	.087	2.30*
	2	22	4.104	.327	.070	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 10

Alpha Internal Consistency - .87

Test-Retest - .85

TABLE 2

Clear School Mission
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	29	3.162	.667	.124	.72
	2	31	3.274	.528	.095	
B	1	21	3.605	.368	.080	1.98
	2	22	3.889	.551	.117	
C	1	23	3.394	.712	.149	.40
	2	22	3.480	.725	.155	
D	1	50	2.874	.659	.093	3.44**
	2	50	3.291	.549	.078	
E	1	24	3.711	.299	.061	7.71**
	2	24	4.461	.371	.076	
F	1	37	3.584	.411	.068	2.83**
	2	38	3.855	.415	.067	
G	1	24	4.042	.531	.108	.80
	2	22	4.156	.426	.091	

** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 14
Alpha Internal Consistency - .90
Test-Retest - .90

TABLE 3

Instructional Leadership
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	27	3.293	.471	.091	.67
	2	30	3.204	.529	.096	
B	1	21	3.722	.427	.093	2.96**
	2	20	4.132	.459	.103	
C	1	21	3.051	.541	.118	.31
	2	22	3.109	.663	.141	
D	1	51	2.823	.493	.069	.85
	2	47	2.909	.508	.074	
E	1	22	3.258	.686	.146	2.25*
	2	23	3.664	.518	.108	
F	1	37	3.388	.489	.080	1.61
	2	39	3.600	.642	.103	
G	1	21	2.769	.568	.124	1.66
	2	19	3.065	.555	.127	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 25

Alpha Internal Consistency - .93

Test-Retest - .83

TABLE 4

High Expectations
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	29	3.092	.376	.070	1.69
	2	31	3.252	.310	.056	
B	1	22	3.223	.246	.052	.90
	2	20	3.256	.278	.062	
C	1	25	2.797	.468	.094	.15
	2	22	2.818	.517	.110	
D	1	56	3.031	.376	.050	.29
	2	49	3.053	.374	.053	
E	1	26	3.343	.456	.089	2.90**
	2	24	3.701	.416	.085	
F	1	37	2.754	.456	.075	1.77
	2	39	2.953	.518	.083	
G	1	25	3.303	.366	.073	.24
	2	21	3.278	.355	.077	

** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 12
Alpha Internal Consistency - .55
Test-Retest - .69

TABLE 5

Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	27	3.327	.404	.073	1.64
	2	31	3.478	.297	.053	
B	1	22	3.678	.311	.066	1.88
	2	21	3.837	.238	.052	
C	1	24	3.271	.455	.093	.25
	2	22	3.307	.531	.113	
D	1	55	3.321	.369	.050	.52
	2	50	3.358	.359	.051	
E	1	25	4.110	.331	.066	1.10
	2	23	3.993	.404	.084	
F	1	36	3.384	.371	.062	1.49
	2	38	3.515	.384	.062	
G	1	25	3.620	.280	.056	2.28*
	2	21	3.817	.308	.067	

* $p < .05$

Number of Items - 12
Alpha Internal Consistency - .66
Test-Retest - .74

TABLE 6

Monitoring Student Progress
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

School	Cycle	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	t
A	1	29	3.567	.384	.071	.89
	2	31	3.657	.397	.071	
B	1	22	3.694	.386	.082	1.37
	2	21	3.874	.475	.104	
C	1	26	3.385	.571	.112	1.09
	2	23	3.549	.477	.099	
D	1	55	3.459	.427	.058	.44
	2	51	3.495	.425	.059	
E	1	24	3.773	.322	.066	4.13**
	2	24	4.178	.357	.073	
F	1	38	3.572	.441	.072	3.14*
	2	37	3.907	.483	.079	
G	1	23	3.759	.416	.087	1.44
	2	21	3.939	.413	.090	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 11

Alpha Internal Consistency - .77

Test-Retest - .67

TABLE 7

Home/School Relations
Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
School Means, Variances and t Values

<u>School</u>	<u>Cycle</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error</u>	<u>t</u>
A	1	28	2.929	.485	.092	.17
	2	31	2.948	.414	.074	
B	1	21	3.622	.413	.090	1.89
	2	21	3.869	.433	.095	
C	1	25	2.544	.526	.105	1.81
	2	23	2.838	.600	.125	
D	1	56	2.789	.534	.071	2.64**
	2	50	3.019	.322	.046	
E	1	24	3.436	.487	.099	4.24**
	2	24	3.967	.372	.076	
F	1	37	2.609	.437	.072	2.15*
	2	37	2.847	.510	.084	
G	1	24	3.358	.396	.081	.89
	2	20	3.453	.290	.065	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Number of Items - 15

Alpha Internal Consistency - .88

Test-Retest - .82

TABLE 8

Connecticut School Effectiveness Questionnaire
 Significant Change in Scores After One Year
 of Program Implementation and Overall
 Intensity of Implementation Effort

School	Safety	Mission	Leadership	Expectations	Time	Monitoring	Home	Overall Intensity of Implementation Effort
A								Low
B			Positive Change					High
C								Low
D		Positive Change					Positive Change	Moderate
E	Positive Change	Positive Change	Positive Change	Positive Change		Positive Change	Positive Change	High
F		Positive Change				Positive Change	Positive Change	High
G	Positive Change				Positive Change			Moderate

p < .05